

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office
Hidden Valley Road
Carlsbad, California 92009
Phone: 760/431-9440
Fax: 760/431-9624

News Release



<http://carlsbad.fws.gov>

(R)

04-121

Contact: Jane Hendron, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office – 760/431-9440 ext. 205

For Release: December 1, 2004

DRAFT ANALYSIS OF MUNZ'S ONION CONSERVATION COSTS **RELEASED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released today a draft analysis that estimates costs related to conservation activities for the federally endangered *Allium munzii* (Munz's onion) on 1,295 acres of essential habitat could range up to \$6.4 million by the year 2025.

Of the 1,295 acres of essential habitat identified for the plant, approximately 227 acres of land managed by the U.S. Forest Service is proposed as critical habitat. Potential future costs to the Forest Service are estimated to total about \$23,964 by the year 2025.

The remaining 1,068 acres of essential habitat are within the boundaries of the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, approved by the Service in 2004. These lands were excluded from proposed critical habitat because the Service determined the Western Riverside Plan provides for the conservation of the species.

Past impacts related to conservation activities in essential habitat that occurred from the time Munz's onion was listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1998 to the present totaled about \$4.2 million. Of this amount, approximately \$10,000 was incurred by the Forest Service.

Conservation activities identified in the draft analysis include measures undertaken to comply with the requirements of the ESA, the California Endangered Species Act and other local laws. Types of costs resulting from compliance with these laws include project modifications, management of habitat, and administrative costs.

The Service is accepting comments and information on the draft economic analysis and proposed critical habitat designation until 5:00 pm on January 3, 2005. The draft analysis can be downloaded from the Internet at <http://carlsbad.fws.gov>.

Critical habitat identifies specific geographic areas essential to the conservation of a federally listed species and which may require special management considerations or protection. The designation of critical habitat does not establish a refuge, wilderness or other preserve area and only those projects being carried out, funded, or authorized by a Federal agency require consultation with the Service to ensure a project will not adversely modify designated critical

habitat.

During the rulemaking process, the ESA requires an analysis of economic impacts associated with designating any particular area as critical habitat. Economic and other relevant impacts may be considered in determining whether the benefits of excluding a particular area as critical habitat outweigh the benefits of including it in such designation, unless the exclusion would result in a species' extinction.

Munz's onion, a member of the lily family, is found only on mesic clay soils in western Riverside County at elevations between 984 to 3,511 feet above mean sea level. Currently, 19 scattered populations of Munz's onion are known to exist.

In 30 years of implementing the Endangered Species Act, the Service has found that the designation of critical habitat provides little additional protection to most listed species, while preventing the Service from using scarce conservation resources for activities with greater conservation benefits.

In almost all cases, recovery of listed species will come through voluntary cooperative partnerships, not regulatory measures such as critical habitat. Habitat is also protected through cooperative measures under the ESA, including Habitat Conservation Plans, Safe Harbor Agreements, Candidate Conservation Agreements and state programs. In addition, voluntary partnership programs such as the Service's Private Stewardship Grants and Partners for Fish and Wildlife program also restore habitat. Habitat for endangered species is provided on many national wildlife refuges, managed by the Service and state wildlife management areas.

Comments and materials on the proposed critical habitat designation and draft economic analysis should be submitted to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92009. Comments may also be submitted by e-mail to fwlcfwoalmu@rl.fws.gov.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

- FWS -

For more information visit our website at <http://www.fws.gov>